

Message Text

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14

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 DHA-02 /083 W

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R 170310Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6758

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VIENTIANE 1724

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, LA, VT

SUBJECT: CLOSURE OF A CATHOLIC CHURCH IN VIENTIANE

ROME FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

REF VIENTIANE 1535 (260451Z JUN 76)

1. AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF LAO COMMUNIST PRESSURE ON THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (REFTEL), THE CHURCH OF NOTRE DAME IN THE PHONE XAY QUARTIER OF VIENTIANE (TE 484.879) WAS CLOSED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN LATE JUNE, 1976. WE HAVE NOT YET DETERMINED TO WHAT USE THE BUILDING WILL BE PUT.

2. IMMACULATA CHURCH AT KM 3 ON THE THA DEUA ROAD IN THE SALA-KOKTANE DISTRICT (TE 481.844) WAS SIMILARLY CLOSED IN MID-1975, AND ITS BUILDING APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME LIVING QUARTERS FOR LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES. ENGLISH-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SPEAKING CATHOLICS THEREUPON SHIFTED TO THE CHURCH OF NOTRE

DAME AND CONTINUED TO WORSHIP THERE EVEN AFTER SUNDAY-AFTERNOON
MASSES IN ENGLISH WERE DISCONTINUED ABOUT JANUARY, 1976.

3. NOW, ONLY ONE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS KNOWN TO REMAIN IN VIENTIANE:
THIS IS THE CHURCH OF SACRE COEUR IN THE PHIAVAT QUARTIER,
ACROSS A SIDE-STREET FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY COMPOUND (TE 478.872).
MASSES CONTINUE THERE, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, IN FRENCH AND
LAO BUT ARE NOT OFFERED IN ENGLISH -- EVIDENTLY FOR "POLITICAL"
REASONS -- EVEN THOUGH A LAO ASSISTANT PRIEST SPEAKS GOOD
ENGLISH AND PERHAPS HALF THE PARISHIONERS NOWADAYS ARE
BRITISH OR AMERICAN. THE SENIOR PRIEST AT SACRE COEUR IS THE
ONLY REMAINING FRENCH PRIEST IN THE CITY (REFTEL, PARA 6).
BOTH HE AND HIS LAO ASSISTANT SHIFTED FROM NOTRE DAME TO
SACRE COEUR, OR PERHAPS HAD SERVED THE TWO PARISHES SIMULTANEOUSLY.

4. MEANWHILE, SO FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE, ALL OR
ALMOST ALL PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS FACILITIES IN VIENTIANE
HAVE ALSO BEEN CLOSED DURING THE PAST YEAR, SOME OF THEM
EVIDENTLY ONLY IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS.
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